

E 475

.35

.B36

Copy 1

Beale, James

Chancellorville - A
paper read before the United
Service Club, Phila. Penna.
on Wednesday Feb. 8, 1888.



Class E475

35

Book B36

CHANGELLOSVILLE

A Paper read before The United Service Club
Philadelphia, Penna.
on Wednesday, February 8, 1888

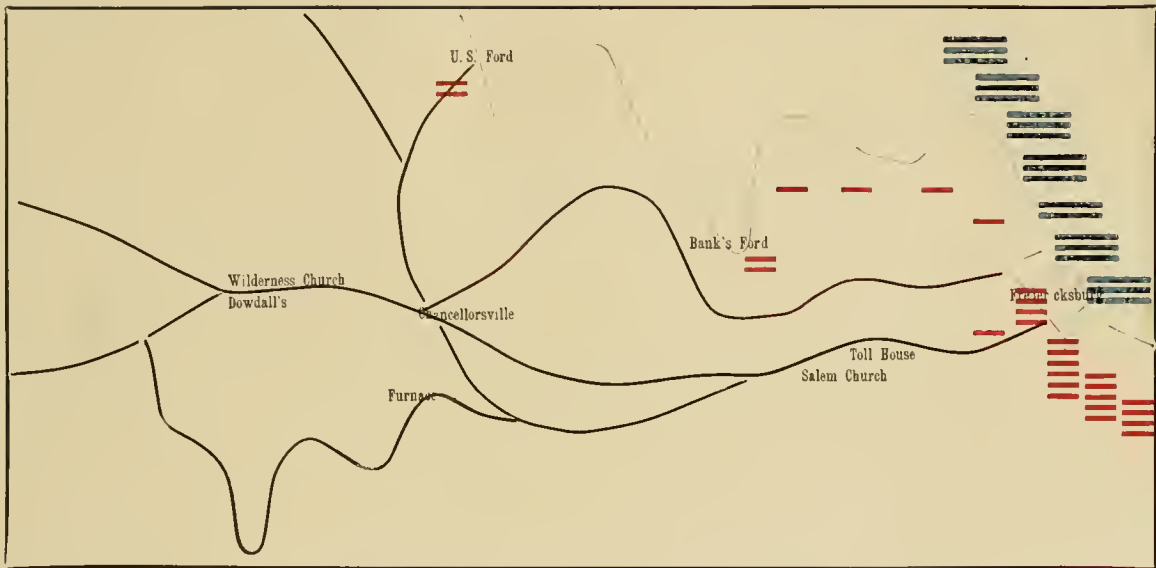
by JAMES BEACE late 12th Mass. Vol. Infantry

SECOND EDITION

PHILADELPHIA

1892

S. S. F.



MAP I. PRIOR TO APRIL 29.

VVVVVV
VVVVVV
VVVVVV

One Hundred and Fifty Copies Printed

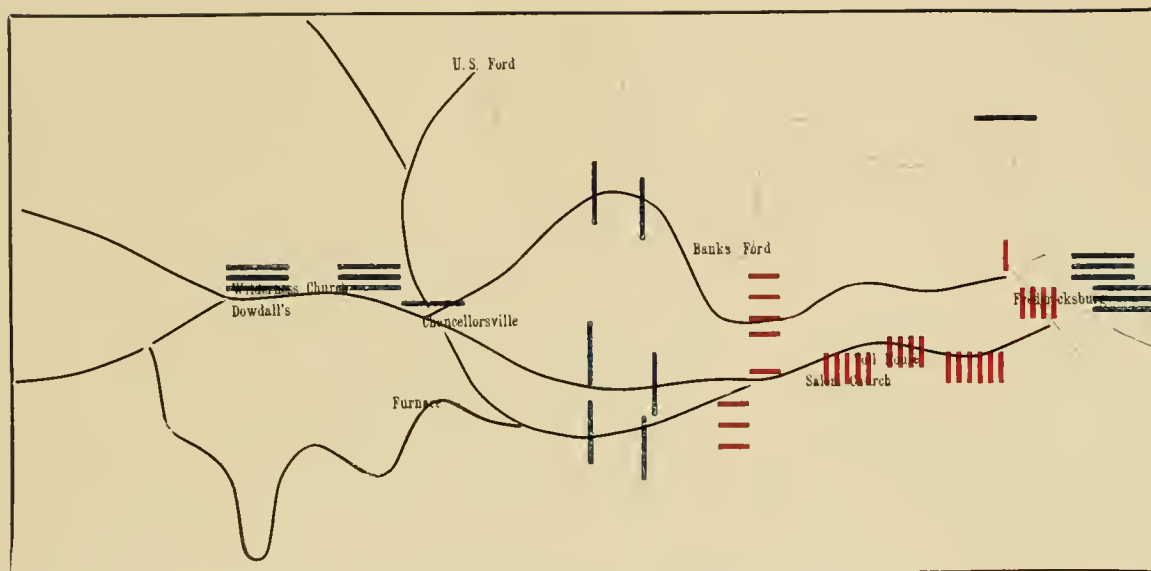
JAMES BEALE, Printer,
719 Sansom Street, Philadelphia.

7041
'01



THE Chancellorsville campaign is one of the vexed problems in the history of the Army of the Potomac. It is admitted that its brilliant commencement was dimmed by its ignoble ending, and quite a variety of opinions, with some asperity of debate concerning the operations, has arisen. No one can approach the subject without forming some opinion. The present intent is to as far as possible let the facts tell their own story.

Those of us who then served in the Potomac army will recollect the feeling of discontent which had arisen, and certainly none can withhold from General Hooker all praise for the transformation that followed his assumption of command. He himself impulsively declared it "the finest army on the planet," but it contained elements of discord. The service of twenty-three thousand short-term men was about to expire, and with much unanimity these declined further duty. I well recollect one regiment which on April 28 flatly refused to break camp. De Peyster alludes to thirty-eight regiments which left the line on the morning of May 4, and speaks of others as having to be forced up at the point of the bayonet. Have we all forgotten the rumors of a



MAP II. EASTWARD ADVANCE MAY 1.

* In the "Official Reports of Chancellorsville," of which but five copies were issued by the War Department, some officers, in giving diagrams of positions, show locations held by "stragglers." I am indebted to the courtesy of Colonel John P. Nicholson for access to the volume.

“stragglers’ brigade”?* and is it not a query whether Hooker’s assertion was not more of a wish than a fact?

Be this as it may, he conceived a plan of campaign, by skilful manœuvring decoyed the wily Jackson some miles down the river, and with three of his seven corps turned Lee’s left flank. According to the *Richmond Examiner* of May 1 it was five a. m. of April 29 when the first news of the Federal passage of the Rappahannock was received at Fredericksburg, but Lee seems to have remained quiescent until May 1, when he began to bestir himself. Meantime the Third Corps, with two divisions of the Second Corps, had been added to the troops at Chancellorsville, and on May 1 Hooker ordered an eastward advance. Lee also had determined to investigate, and at about the same time advanced westwardly. Some desultory fighting ensued, resulting in the return of the Federal columns and the taking up of a new position.



HERE the student begins his troubles. There are those who would have us believe that from this moment Hooker parted company with his wits. De Peyster almost laments that he had not fallen ere ordering this retrograde. Hooker’s explanation is that he was apprehensive of being “whipped in detail,” but some of the officers concerned in the movement think this apprehension unfounded. General Humphreys, for instance, says “We should not have been withdrawn. . . . We ought to have fought the enemy there.” General Hancock declares “I have no doubt we ought to have still kept pushing on.”

Right or wrong, Hooker withdrew, and the night of May 1 was spent in fortifying the position along the plank road and north of Chancellorsville, during which time Lee

ruminated on the problem, still uncertain whether the blow was to come from the east or west.

AFTER a serious conference with Jackson it was agreed that the latter should take his corps and endeavor to turn the Federal right. The daring of the conception is only equalled by the contempt displayed for the Federal troops. Jackson started; it is said he inquired his way as he went along, having no definite route fixed. He had not gone far before he came in plain sight from Hooker's lines, and as the road here bends sharply to the south the general impression immediately was "Lee is retreating."

Early that morning Hooker had ordered the First Corps to his right, but the messenger lost his way and did not reach General Reynolds till nearly five o'clock that evening. Hooker also personally visited General Howard's position, and at half-past nine o'clock a. m. wrote an order to Howard in which he avers "The right of your line does not appear strong enough; please advance your pickets."

Howard denies having received this order, and is backed by his adjutant-general. The order appears in Howard's letter-book among some June memoranda, which shows it eventually reached him. Did he get it on May 2?

General Schurz avers that he received it and read it to Howard on May 2. The Eleventh Corps chief-of-staff is quoted as saying that Howard read the order and pocketed it. Which statement shall we believe?

Meanwhile the Union soldiers listlessly watched this mysterious column moving in their front, and idly conjectured as to its meaning. I have no doubt the prevailing

* Colonel William L. Candler.

† Bates' "Chancellorsville," page 90.

impression at the time was that it was a movement in retreat; but an officer of Hooker's staff, of unquestioned conscientiousness,* is very circumstantial in his statement of what took place at headquarters. He declares that after watching the movement Hooker spread a map on the bed and carefully studied it, soliloquizing somewhat thus: "It can't be retreat; retreat without a fight? that is not Lee. If not retreat, what is it? Lee is trying to flank me." Having reasoned to this point, the 9.30 order was drawn and sent to Howard on the right, where it was supposed the First Corps would shortly be.



ON its face it certainly looks as though Hooker had taken all possible precaution. It was not his fault that the despatch to the First Corps miscarried; he had notified Howard to be careful; and Professor Bates claims a message from Howard, dated eleven o'clock, a. m., in which Howard refers to this moving column of the enemy as visible from the extreme right, and says he is "taking measures to resist an attack from the west." †

General Sickles now requests that he be allowed to move out and investigate. Two divisions of the Third Corps break their way through the forest, and a rifled battery opens on the Confederate column, which speedily disappears from the road whereon it had been seen. Closer examination proved that the column had merely shifted to a parallel road, and was still moving; but the reports sent in induced Hooker to send a telegram to General Butterfield saying "We know that the enemy is flying, trying to save his trains."

In order to reap his full harvest, General Sickles demanded more troops. A brigade

* Brigadier-General F. C. Barlow's.

† Brigadier-General A. S. Williams'.

from the Eleventh Corps,* a division of the Twelfth Corps,† and what few cavalry had been left with the army, moved out to the front. Still unsatisfied, General Sickles asked for his remaining division, but it was not sent. While he is busy with his dispositions let us see what “measures” Howard had taken to “resist an attack from the west.”



section of artillery facing westwardly, two regiments, the men standing three feet apart, and thirty-five cavalymen as patrol. The rest of the corps facing south. General Devens says, “These dispositions were ordered by Major-General Howard, and examined by him after they were made.” Having in this fashion made his line secure, Howard accompanied Barlow’s brigade in its journey in quest of Sickles. Meanwhile the Eleventh Corps was formally notified to get its supper, make itself comfortable, and—go to bed!

In the official reports, as well as in the sworn testimony, there is so much of contradiction that one is puzzled to get at the precise truth. Instances of this will appear further on. A case in point is Barlow’s brigade.

General Birney says “Barlow reported to me that he was on my right, and had completed the connection between it and his corps.”

Colonel Underwood, whose regiment led Barlow’s column, says “Barlow’s brigade marched by itself down the furnace road for miles. Night overtook it. It received no orders from anybody, and that it stopped before reaching Orange Court House was due probably to good luck as much as to anything. It marched back to see if it could find out anything, halted within a mile of Dowdall’s Tavern, and General Barlow held a council with his colonels. It was determined to come back, and as the only road known

* The Confederate military prison at Andersonville, Ga., was not opened until February, 1864, nearly a year later.

† 11th Mass., 1st brigade 2d division 3d corps.

‡ Acting. The ranking officer ran away, and was therefor dismissed the service.

§ Colonel Ryan, 63d Penna., 1st brigade 1st division 3d corps.

was the one on which it marched out, it was decided to take that back to camp. If it had, probably most of the brigade would have been next day on its way to Andersonville.”*

This hardly substantiates General Birney’s statement made in his official report.

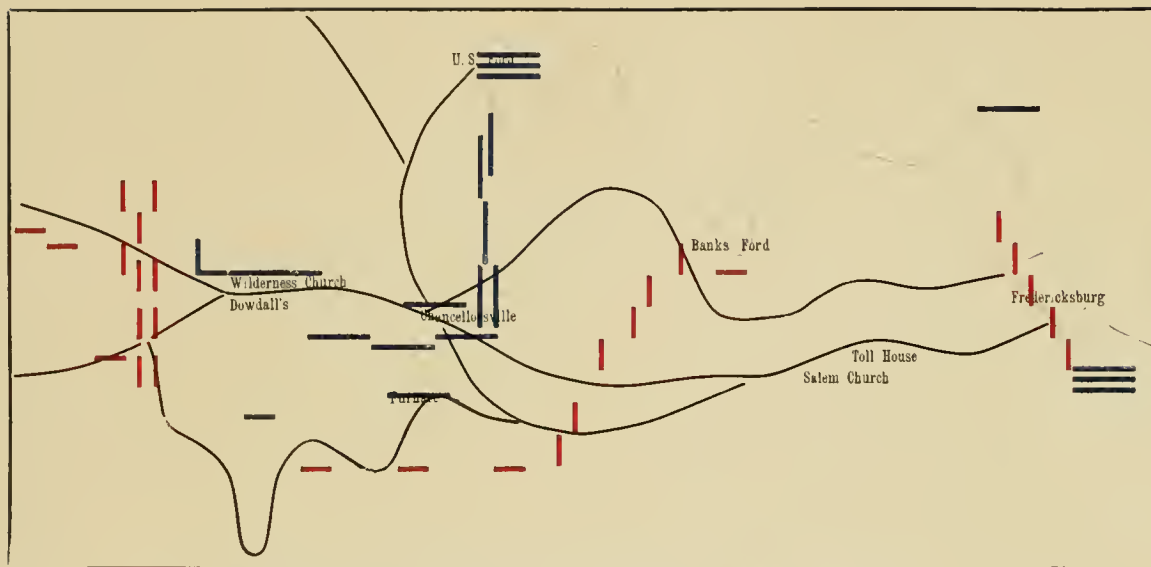
BUT General Birney also contradicts his corps commander, for in his report cited above he says he “was preparing to bivouac when informed that the Eleventh Corps had been driven in.” In his testimony before the Committee on the Conduct of the War, he says “I formed my division into a large square, with my artillery in the centre.”

General Sickles says “I was about to open my attack in full force; had got all ready for that purpose.” Thus we have a corps commander about to open an attack with a division that is preparing to bivouac.

This is not the only strange thing about this forward movement to the furnace. If the Third Corps reports are to be believed the wearers of the diamond badge displayed some backwardness in going forward.

Colonel Blaisdell†—styled by his corps general “a circumspect and intrepid commander”—says of the Berdan sharpshooters sent out with him, “It was impossible to keep them to the front.” His lieutenant-colonel adds, “They shamefully ran from the enemy’s fire.”

The chief-of-artillery Third Division Third Corps‡ complains that one of his batteries received a volley from its infantry support. One of General Birney’s regimental commanders§ speaks of “rallying fragments of regiments” of his own division “even



MAP III. JACKSON'S ATTACK MAY 2 P.M.

* Major Brady, 17th Conn., 2d brigade 1st division 11th corps.

† Von Gilsa's.

at the point of the bayonet." General Birney himself reports two colonels and two lieutenant-colonels of his division as "behaving badly." These are frank admissions, and one cannot help inferring that all was not what fond fancy could wish.



THE forces before the Third Corps were the 23d Georgia (captured), a battery of artillery, and the brigades of Posey, Wright, Archer and Thomas. It has been claimed that this forward movement was intended to be in the nature of a parry to Jackson's flank move. In other words, in flanking Hooker Jackson was himself to be flanked by Sickles. In theory this is no doubt excellent; but, unfortunately for its success, Jackson was not in the habit of walking into such traps. Jackson's attack was from the west; the Third Corps was facing to the south. No one can doubt the patriotism or bravery of the Third Corps; but assuredly the movement to the furnace—beyond question well meant—was unfortunate in its execution.

Jackson found the Eleventh Corps with its right in air and a gap of nearly two miles on its left. He formed on either side of and perpendicular to the turnpike—Rodes in advance, followed by Colston, with A. P. Hill in support. The orders were of the most positive nature,—“stop for nothing.” “push right on,” “under no circumstances pause.” An hour was spent in preparation, and soon after five p. m. the signal was given, and Jackson swiftly moved forward.

The Eleventh Corps reports are unanimous in declaring that the section of artillery posted in the road promptly departed without firing a shot. One officer adds “Neither did they undertake to fire a gun.”* And the brigade on the extreme right† not only

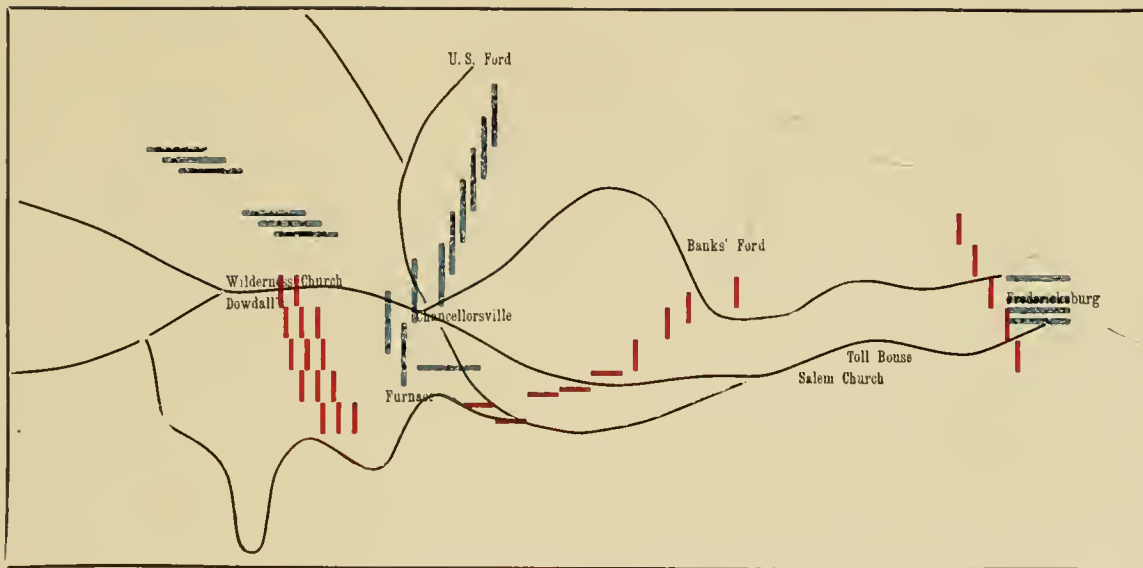
* Bushbeck's.

† General Sickles claims to have recovered some of this, but the officer in charge says this is an error.

abandoned its position with much haste, but in its flight stampeded McLean's brigade. This practically put an end to General Devens' division. General Schimmelfennig, who was on the left of McLean, avers that Von Gilsa fired one round, McLean none, and that neither could be rallied again. General Schurz's division appears to have made some effort at resistance, for the Confederates admit some fighting in this vicinity; and by the time they had eliminated Schurz and reached the solitary brigade* representing Steinwehr's division they acknowledge "stubborn resistance," "heavy fire of artillery and musketry."

BY dark the Confederates were within a mile of Hooker's headquarters, the Eleventh Corps had vanished, and the three lines with which Jackson started had become so confusedly mixed that it was positively necessary to halt for reformation. Riding forward in the darkness to examine the enemy's line, Stonewall Jackson was wounded, and a week later,—with his mind still on his last great work,—crossed "over the river," to "rest under the shadow of the green trees" of immortality.

This sudden onslaught of Jackson and consequent withdrawal of the Eleventh Corps found the Third Corps general "about to open an attack on Jackson's forces." He promptly abandoned this purpose and managed to regain the Union lines. In this movement his ordnance officer left as a souvenir seventy thousand rounds of ammunition snugly cased on the packs of thirty-five mules.† Reaching Chancellorsville he ordered a charge on the Confederates, which was made by General Ward, supported by Graham and Hayman. This latter officer says "The rifle-pits were carried in the face of a



MAP IV. MAY 3 A.M.

* Colonel Pierce, 3d Michigan, 3d brigade 1st division 3d corps.

† Colonel Underwood, 33d Mass., 2d brigade 2d division 11th corps.

‡ Lieutenant W. H. Gordon, 61st New York, 1st brigade 1st division 2d corps.

terrible fire from friend and foe." One of his colonels* adds "It was discovered that we were charging the Twelfth Corps." An eyewitness † of the charge says "We saw the start and saw the return—a demoralized mass of men running to the rear as fast as their legs could carry them." General Hayman acknowledges that his brigade "was not fully reorganized till it was placed in a strong position to the rear." The Confederates seem to consider this midnight charge an affair of small moment, for their mention of it is very brief and somewhat contemptuous. Witness Rodes, "Being feeble in its character and promptly met, it lasted but a short time."



T was now midnight. Stuart had been called to take Jackson's place, and concluded to wait for daylight ere renewing hostilities. Hooker was busy laying out a new line in which the Eleventh Corps was carefully placed out of harm's way, the right being assigned to the First Corps, which had arrived on the field. Hooker also bethought him of General Sedgwick, and ordered him to march forthwith, destroy all that came in his road, and report in Lee's rear just as early on Sunday morning as was possible.

Very early in the morning of May 3 Stuart pushed his troops forward. That there was some heavy fighting is attested by the Union losses, and the fact that it took hours to force Hooker's line. Yet the student is puzzled, for the reports cheerfully testify to much of running away.

A Second Corps officer ‡ says "The regiments in the rifle-pits on the right gave way, and passed us in disorder. About 11.30 o'clock the 66th New York broke and fled in dismay." General Sickles alludes to the "premature and hasty retirement of

* Colonel Tippen, 68th Penna., 1st brigade 1st division 3d corps.

† Colonel Collis, 114th Penna., 1st brigade 1st division 3d corps. This officer's report is endorsed as "a complete romance from beginning to end." He was placed in arrest for misbehavior before the enemy.

‡ Lieutenant-Colonel Riordan, 37th New York, 3d brigade 1st division 3d corps.

§ Lieutenant-Colonel Merrill, 17th Maine, 3d brigade 1st division 3d corps.

|| Brigadier-General J. W. Revere, 2d brigade 2d division 3d corps.

** "Premature and precipitate withdrawal." Captain Poland, chief-of-staff 3d division.

"Injudicious retreat." Brigadier-General J. B. Carr, 1st brigade 1st division.

"Regiment being badly broken up." Lt.-Col. Olmsted, 2d New York, 3d brigade 2d division.

"A regiment of our troops broke through my ranks." Lt.-Col. Price, 7th N.J., 3d brig. 2d div.

"Gave way in confusion at first volley." Capt. J. C. Langston, 8th N.J., 3d brig. 2d div.

"The enemy drove the first division." Maj. Dunne, 115th Penna., 3d brigade 2d division.

"I saw our troops break and run without giving the enemy a single volley." Col. S. M. Bowman, 2d brigade 3d division.

*† Brig.-Gen. J. F. Knipe, 1st brigade 1st division.

*† 114th Penna.

*‡ Brig.-Gen. T. H. Ruger.

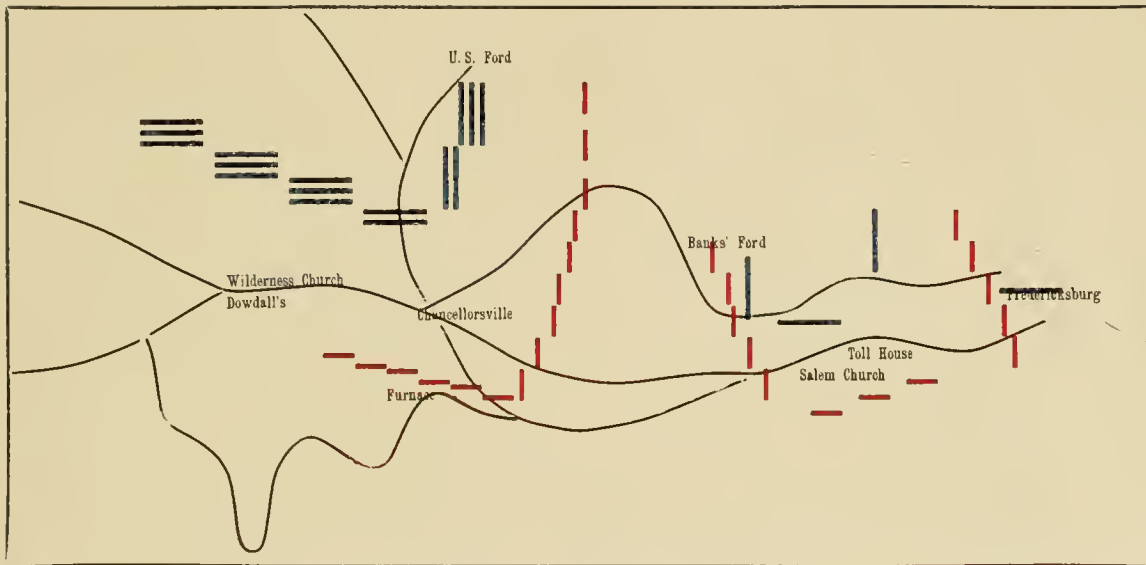
*|| Col. Hawley, 3d Wisconsin, 3d brig. 1st div. 12th corps.

the 3d Maryland." A Third Corps colonel* reports "the front lines having broken and fallen back in some confusion." Another† complains that "men from other regiments of the corps came rushing through my line in great confusion." Still another‡ found "a great stream of men belonging to the Third Corps going to the rear." Yet another,§ "While retiring the regiment was divided and separated by other troops." Another officer|| took nearly a brigade to the rear, and at noon reports having one thousand seven hundred and fifteen men, representing nine regiments, which he had recruited from "a constant stream of stragglers." It is wearisome to cite, yet to show that the picture is not overdrawn, I quote a few phrases from Third Corps official reports all having reference to Third Corps troops on May 3.**



brigadier of the Twelfth Corps*† says "I ordered the regiments of the Third Corps which were lying down in my front to move forward and assist our men at the barricade. I failed, for a regiment of red-legged zouaves*‡ came pell-mell from our left with less than half their number of the enemy close at their heels. They could not be rallied, and were the cause of the giving way of General Berry's line and our own, as they carried with them the troops intended as re-enforcements. These never came up nor fired a shot." Another*§ says "The Third Corps troops on my right yielded to the enemy;" while a colonel*|| formally rebukes a regiment of his own division for firing into him.

In spite of all this it took the entire forenoon to force Hooker's line. Hooker is disabled, and the exhausted troops pause to take breath. Lee, leaving Stuart to watch Hooker, detaches part of his troops and marches eastwardly to meet Sedgwick.



MAP V. MAY 3 P.M.



HOOKER'S message to General Sedgwick found him some miles below Fredericksburg; it was daylight of May 3 ere he reached the town. Still waiting and reconnoitring, it was eleven a. m. ere he forced Marye's Hill and essayed to march toward Hooker. Even then he waited to let his rear division lead the column, and on reaching Salem Church found himself confronted by a considerable number of the enemy, and received the pleasing intelligence that Early's troops had reoccupied the heights from which he had just driven them. From this out General Sedgwick seems to have known nothing but Banks' Ford—his despatches teem with reference to this haven—and on the night of May 4 he did cross there, and thus relieved Lee from any anxiety he may have entertained.

The contest was now over, and on May 6 Hooker withdrew from the south side and recrossed the Rappahannock. Was it a victory or was it a defeat? Let one despatch answer.

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF POTOMAC,

Near Chancellorsville, Va., May 5, 1863.

To the Commanding Officer Confederate Forces, Chancellorsville, Va.

I would most respectfully request the privilege of sending a burial party on the field of Chancellorsville to bury the dead there and care for the wounded officers and soldiers of my command.

Very respectfully,

JOSEPH HOOKER, *Major-General Commanding.*





CHANCELLORSVILLE







LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 013 702 034 8